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The United States Marine Corps:
Going back to go forward

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of National Security Decision Making.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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15. Abstract: The changing world security environment has posed numerous challenges to the U.S. since the end of the cold war. It is still trying to figure out how to change the military to become an effective instrument in the new world situation. The Marine Corps position in the new requirements for the U.S. Defense Department is especially challenging. During the cold war no one questioned the duplication of roles and missions which were built into U.S. war planning and ultimately into the Marine Corps organization. The ability to conduct large-scale land and air campaigns arose out of this situation. To meet today's challenges of downsizing and fewer resources, the Marine Corps must adapt. To do this all it has to do is look to the past. A rebirth in MEB size amphibious capability must be accomplished. Shedding numerous platforms that duplicate other service capabilities and missions is a must. Fighter aircraft, tanks, and extraneous aviation command and control can readily be jettisoned. Organization and training must be reoriented to focus on amphibious operations rather than land and air campaigns separate from amphibious operations. Supporting structure should also be reduced, consolidated and funneled into the fighting forces. By focusing on its specialty, amphibious operations, the Marine Corps can be a critical and much needed tool of the national security strategy in the uncertain future.			
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The United States of America finds itself in a new position since the end of the cold war: being the single great power in the world, not only militarily but also economically, politically and possibly culturally. The initial reaction when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down was that National Security would become less complicated, more secure and cheaper. There have been immense savings in the defense budget since the end of the cold war. The difficulty being faced by the Defense Department is how to shape the military for an international environment that is more complex. It was easier when there was a known threat who was an equal. Now the threat is unknown. There are no peer competitors on the horizon. This, all agree, cannot continue forever. History confirms that eventually either the United States strength will erode to that of another power or another state will strengthen itself until it is a rival of the United States.

The strategy followed by the United States since the end of the cold war has been to pare down around the edges. Cut back force structure without any radical redesign. The pace of technology continues to increase and currently the United States holds a large lead over all other militaries. In the absence of creative new strategies from within the Defense Department, where eventually they must originate if they are to be implemented, a strategy of maintaining the capability to fight two near simultaneous Major Theater Wars (MTW) has evolved. The assumption is that if this is the worst case scenario then the military will be able to handle any other scenarios that may arise. These two MTW's (usually based on a Korea and Southwest Asia scenario) protect the basic structure and equipment of the military shaped for the former Soviet Union. The militaries envisioned as enemies were trained and equipped by the Soviets.

The success of Operation Desert Storm has shored up this strategy and is used to defend it. The Achilles heel of this strategy is that this force equipped for these scenarios will not necessarily be able to handle all lesser contingencies. The North Vietnamese demonstrated that an enemy may not always challenge our strengths and that firepower and technology can be successfully challenged. Our future enemies will learn the correct lessons from Desert Storm; to attack our weaknesses and not our strengths. All U.S. operations since the end of the Cold War have highlighted these weaknesses: lack of patience when our vital interest are not forcefully threatened, indecisiveness, increasing reliance on high technology, and lack of will in the face of casualties. The United States military will continue to dominate the conventional battlefield as it did in Desert Storm. Will it be able to dominate against other possible threats in the future?

All the services are actively preparing for the future of armed conflict. They have developed experimental programs to not only test new equipment, but also new organizations and tactics. These types of programs will be critical to success on the future battlefield. In conjunction there is much talk of the Revolution in Military Affairs. Technology will have a large impact on warfare in the future and the services are all actively trying to discover how and to shape and speed up the revolution. What about before the revolution has come? What about the threats already developing? These are shaping themselves to take advantage of U.S. weaknesses. What if a service could bring about a subtle revolution today? Not one centered on technology but on organization, training and readiness. The Marine Corps could bring about this revolution today not by reading the tea leaves of the future but by returning to the past.

The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 has brought about numerous positive changes in the military as evidenced by the numerous successes since 1986 and it continues to bring more. Many of the aims though still have not been achieved. The only guidance on how the goal for the services is Joint Vision 2000 that is a vague map on how to get to the future. There are some checks to ensure the services follow this map but much is left to them on how to get there. The services have increased their ability to operate together: there are numerous joint tours and staffs, more common equipment, and many more multi service exercises and operations. Many of these changes still have to reach the lowest levels. There are large numbers of enlisted and junior officers who have never worked with another service, not just on a staff but more critically at the tactical level on the battlefield. There are so many overlapping functions among the services that there is little incentive to practice with another service when having them provide a function will only cut down on limited training time for your own people. With three air forces and two armies there is much overlapping of capability and functions. "Service perspectives can be fused into truly joint planning and execution when their responsibilities are grounded in the fundamental dimensions of land, sea, and air operations which define core competencies. It is only at the dimensional margins, where defining competencies collide, that the services must genuinely reconcile competing views."¹

During the Cold War defense budgets could support this arrangement and all the capability it required. As defense budgets shrink and the number of personnel shrink can the United States still maintain so much redundancy? As large threats fade there will be increasing pressure to do more with less, to continue to pare down. If the military does

¹ Richard D. Hooker, Jr., "America's 2 Armies," Joint Force Quarterly, Autumn-Winter 94-95, 41.

not change from within where it can have greater influence, change will be forced upon it, maybe not to its liking. " Current U.S. strategy and force planning are too focused on maintaining the force structure that proved effective in winning the last war, while paying too little attention to the uncertain nature of future conflicts. We must now undertake another effort to reshape our strategy and force structure, one that is innovative and forward-thinking and not constrained by the conventional wisdom of the past. A key goal of this effort must be to ensure that our defense strategy and military forces are flexible and capable enough to evolve quickly to meet unanticipated threats. "² The Marine Corps has been America's flexible and always-ready force and must reshape itself to ensure it remains so.

Since the end of World War II the Marine Corps has steadily lost its capability to conduct its primary mission, amphibious operations. As stated in the National Security Act of 1947 the Marine Corps is "for service with the fleet in seizure of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the protection of a naval campaign. These functions do not contemplate the creation of a second land army. " The Cold War affected Marine Corps doctrine, organization, and equipment as it struggled to ensure a role for itself in U.S. defense policy. " The Marine Corps' primary reason for being, its ability to rapidly project power from the sea, has somehow been pushed aside in the scramble for resources that has characterized recent years."³ Its organization has been ensconced in law at no less than three active duty air wings and divisions. Whenever the question of why this is what the Marine Corps requires the answer is because it is law. The American system was designed to change laws that no

² Senator John McCain, " Strategy and Force Planning for the 21st Century," Strategic Review, Fall 1996, 8.

³ LtCol R. Scott Moore, "Maneuver From the Sea...Maybe," Marine Corps Gazette, April, April 1996, 24.

longer are relevant. If the Marine Corps required these forces during the Cold War that may be understandable, but in today's environment, clinging to this outdated law is damaging the future of the Corps. It has become so caught up in competing with the Army and Air Force for a share of the Cold War military booty that the Corps knows no other means of operating. It has duplicated numerous functions and missions that are at the core of the Air Force. This has led to the acquisition of a large and not easily deployed aviation element, especially in command and control. It has meshed this air force into contingency plans in the same role as the Air Force while clinging to the need to be an integrated air-ground team. Much of this structure does little to directly support the ground forces. Its divisions are slated to be used side by side with the Army as in Desert Storm where the Marines had two divisions on land operating much like the Army for the entire conflict. "Structuring and funding the Marine Corps for divisional and multidivisional land operations as in the past will result in redundancy, inefficiency, and interservice friction."⁴ While those in the Marine Corps leadership may see the subtle differences, the American public will not. FMFM1-1 *Campaigning* is entirely devoted to waging extended campaigns on land, only in passing is it mentioned that this might be in conjunction with maritime operations.⁵ When it comes time to cut, the Marine Corps will be in danger. Rather than ensure its existence by copying the Army and Air Force, the Marine Corps must look back to the past.

The technologies that will enable the Revolution in Military Affairs will come. The military will continue to conduct research and their warfighting experiments will further drive this. The Marine Corps must ensure it is ready to meet the challenges of

⁴ Richard D. Hooker, Jr. "America's 2 Armies," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Autumn-Winter 94-95, 43-44.

⁵ Richard D. Hooker, Jr. "America's 2 Armies," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Autumn-Winter 94-95, 46.

today while awaiting the technological revolution. What the Corps can do today is bring about an organizational revolution. As the Cold War went on, amphibious operations were pushed to the rear as the focus was on the Soviet threat. Amphibious lift shrank and aged. Some of this may have been outside the control of the Corps. Never-the-less, the Corps shifted to a new focus. More recently the talk of cheap, potent shallow water mines and long range anti-ship missiles have made amphibious operations obsolete. Without a concerted effort this will remain true. However, history has shown that any weapon can be countered if the effort and resources are invested. Rather than continue to spend huge sums on a massive airforce that prepares for functions which are no longer economical for the Marine Corps to carry out, a much more concerted effort should be put back into amphibious operations.

Is there a place for amphibious operations in the future? Eighty percent of the countries in the world have a coastline. Larger and larger portions of country's populations are shifting to coastal cities. Even in the space age most of the world's commerce is transported over the oceans. With the disappearance of the Soviet threat and drastic drawdowns in permanently stationed forces overseas, the guarantee of basing and overflight rights required by the Army and Air Force become more and more fleeting. As evidenced recently in the Arabian Gulf region, even our recent allies may not be willing to allow U.S. forces on their soil when the United States feels it needs to. While Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) sized division landings may not be feasible in the future, there is still a critical need to be able to carry out amphibious operations at the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) level.

Power projection remains a critical function of the U.S. military in the future. The recent National Defense Panel identified that the military is not paying enough attention to areas where threats are likely to surface, to include the challenge of trying to project forces in areas where access to forward bases will be denied.⁶ The Navy-Marine team still provides the greatest asset to meet this need. Unfortunately the Marine Corps has painted itself into a corner by relying on the Air Force for timely entry into a theater. All major contingency plans have the majority of Marine combat power arriving by air and remaining ashore. This limits the Marine Corps' ability to project power to the same level as the Army. The Maritime Prepositioning Ships which bring much of the Marine's equipment is no longer a unique capability to the Corps. The Army has followed the lead and now has its own prepositioned equipment on ships and other sites overseas. By the end of the first 30 days of a crisis, the Army will have far more combat power in theater than the Marines, as long as there are accessible ports and airfields.⁷ The only location of Marine Corps prepositioned equipment overseas is in Norway. With today's changing strategic and political environment it seems unlikely this equipment will be critical in any near term future contingencies for the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps has not entirely given up on amphibious operations. The Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable) (MEU(SOC)) are very valued assets by all the CINC's. They have proved very successful at the missions they are designed for: raids, noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO), humanitarian assistance, forward presence and other missions designed for the reinforced battalion and squadron along with combat service support which make up the MEU(SOC).

⁶ Jason Sherman, "Brave New World," Armed Forces Journal International, January 1998, 17.

The experience, knowledge and expertise to conduct larger amphibious operations has disappeared in the Marine Corps. "...in its haste to be included in land warfare, [the Marine Corps] no longer possesses the institutional expertise to conduct amphibious warfare above the (MEU) level."⁸ The Marine Corps spends large amounts of money and time training mechanized forces to maneuver across the desert and for the aviation wings to fight independently as an air force. There are no large-scale amphibious operations conducted any more. "Exercises purporting to train in large-scale amphibious operations normally present facades; much of the landing force is prestaged near landing beaches to simulate ships... Computerized simulations wishfully deploy similarly nonexistent ships and then stuff them with landing forces regardless of actual load plans or ship's characteristics."⁹ There are command post exercises but these are not sufficient to be current and successful in conducting the most difficult military operation possible, the amphibious assault. Amphibious planning is no longer emphasized in Marine Corps education or planning. "The growth of the MEF and the concurrent death of the MEB effectively ended any long-term institutional excellence in amphibious operations. MEF command elements, preoccupied with joint issues and grappling with war plans and exercises that pit them as corps-level and joint headquarters in land campaigns, display little interest in amphibious warfare."¹⁰

The Marine Corps acquisitions seem to hold out hope that amphibious operations beyond the MEU(SOC) have not been forsaken. The Corps' primary acquisition projects are the V-22 Osprey and the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle. Both of these,

⁷ John Gordon, IV, "Land Forces for the 21st Century: Time for Decisions," National Security Studies Quarterly, Autumn 1996, 77.

⁸ LtCol R. Scott Moore, "Maneuver From the Sea...Maybe," Marine Corps Gazette, April 1996, 24.

⁹ LtCol R. Scott Moore, "Maneuver From the Sea...Maybe," Marine Corps Gazette, April 1996, 25.

along with the LCAC will greatly improve the capabilities of Marine forces to conduct amphibious operations against modern threats. Without any progress in other areas required to ignite a rebirth in amphibious operations, it appears that these new platforms will be maximized only at the MEU level and to improve the ability of the integrated air-ground land force of the current contingency plans.

If we accept the assumptions that there is a need for amphibious forces in the future, that the Marine Corps' budget will at best remain the same and that personnel numbers will also remain current, how can the Marine Corps best restructure to become more potent and relevant? How can it ensure it will remain America's force that is flexible, prepared, and always ready? The key is to restructure and reengineer the Corps without new systems that are not already in the current queue. How to find extra money without any increase in the Marine budget? How to increase the readiness level of every unit without any more people?

The Marine Corps must first examine its role in the national defense. Will it be expected to fight alone against a large-scale threat? No. Does it need to be self sufficient in all modes of ground combat and all functions of aviation? No. The Marine Corps' specialty is maritime campaigns. It can project force, secure the airfields and ports the Army and Air Force will require. It will continue to be a force of choice for many missions in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). Its combined arms organization, along with combat service support and supported from the sea, provide a unique capability the nation will require frequently in the future. With these parameters it is obvious the Marine Corps has more force structure and equipment than is required.

¹⁰ LtCol R. Scott Moore, "Maneuver From the Sea... Maybe" Marine Corps Gazette, April 1996, 26.

Long term commitments of the Corps should be avoided. The Marine Corps may be the force of choice during the initial stages of many types of MOOTW operations, such as humanitarian assistance. This was successfully accomplished during the initial stages of Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. The Marine Corps is well designed to be the first in to secure ports and airfields. Soon thereafter, the mission must be turned over to the Army and Air Force. How can the Marine Corps be ready to respond anywhere in the world when it is tied down doing a mission the Army can do better? The Marine Corps should not be designed to remain for the long term. It must focus on being a force that is always ready to respond, get in, do the mission, and get out. The other services are better designed and organized for long term presence.

The most rational area where large cuts and reorganization can be effected is Marine Aviation. " Given the tremendous ability of the U.S. Air Force and Navy to gain and maintain air superiority against virtually any conceivable Third World threat, is it really necessary for the Marine Corps to have air superiority-type fighters like the F/A-18 Hornets they currently operate? The Marines have good reason, given their style of operations, to want an organic air element."¹¹ Marine Aviation must return to its roots of close air support. The AV-8B and the AH-1W and UH-1N are excellent platforms for providing the aviation support Marine ground forces require. Even the F/A-18D, touted as an airborne forward air controller or tactical air coordinator, spends 80% of its training in the air-to-air role rather than close air support which is more critical and unique to the Corps. Marine F/A-18 squadrons are currently deploying with Navy aircraft carriers. Turn the F/A-18's over to the Navy. Let the Navy provide the air superiority in the

¹¹ John Gordon, IV, "Land Forces for the 21st Century: Time for Decisions," National Security Studies Quarterly, Autumn 1996, 77.

theater where Marines are operating. As the Marine Corps looks forward to a future with the Joint Strike Fighter, there is already a time envisioned when the Marines will have one fighter-bomber and it will have Vertical-Short take off and landing (VSTOL) capability. The Marine Corps can do that today by relieving itself of the burden of the F/A-18. Along with the F/A-18, there is much other unnecessary structure devoted to maintaining air superiority.

The Hawk missile will be phased out by the end of the fiscal year. The Marine Air Control Squadrons (MACS) are equipment intensive and have a very large footprint. There are currently five active-duty MACS in the Marine Corps. While some reorganization is being done and this is being reduced to three, there is not a need for any. Their mission is to assist in air defense and air superiority. With current advances in technology, the aviation commander can receive the air picture from numerous joint sources without requiring his own air search and control radars. Most of the functions and associated units of the Marine Aviation Command and Control System (MACCS) can be eliminated. The dedicated communication squadrons within the MACCS can be distributed to the remaining units. The only functions required are those of air support control provided by the Marine Air Support Squadron (MASS) and Low Altitude Air Defense (LAAD) Battalion. Both these units would better serve their function if they were to be transferred to the ground combat element. Most of the air traffic control functions required at Marine Corps Air Stations could be done more efficiently and cheaper if they were to be privatized. Only a small number of trained air traffic controllers are required to provide liaison and to run Forward Operating Bases (FOB) required during contingencies.

Without the F/A-18, the wing engineer squadrons can drastically reduce their required equipment and functions required at Expeditionary Airfields (EAF). These EAF's turn into large established airfields which require massive support to operate, maintain and protect as evidenced during Operation Desert Shield and Storm when Marine Aviation operated mostly as another U.S. Air Force. Marine Aviation should restructure to the essence required to support the ground forces in the close fight and remain easily deployable.

Many other support activities can also be privatized to increase the number of Marines serving in the units that provide the tooth. Over 5% of all Marines have administrative occupational specialties. Can the Marine Corps devote that much of its capability to administration? There are several experiments underway to consolidate administrative functions at the Group and Regiment level. Technological advances are making many of these changes possible. These will result in personnel savings. By privatizing almost all administrative functions close to 10,000 personnel can be eliminated or the excess can be used to increase the manning level of unmanned units, thereby increasing their combat readiness. Privatizing many base support and recreation billets that are being filled by Marines will free more personnel to increase readiness of front line units. Why are Marines working behind the registers in Exchanges, at the beaches and the auto hobby shop?

Does the Marine Corps need three divisions? Does the Marine Corps have three divisions? There are three division headquarters and eight regiments, one of which is filled with battalions from another regiment as part of the unit deployment program (UDP) to Okinawa. The Marine Corps is built around three MEF's, each consisting of a

division and a wing as its combat power. The MEF's focus is not on amphibious operations but on preparing to fight the MEF in a MTW ashore. The Marine Corps probably does not have the shipping or expertise and experience to conduct MEF size amphibious operations, or does it need to given the future role of the Marine Corps. What is still required is the ability to conduct a MEB sized amphibious operation.

When the Marine Corps did away with the term MEB and replaced it with MEF (Forward) a subtle shift away from amphibious operations occurred. "As the name implies, the concept of a forward MEF command element means that a larger Marine force will follow, probably by nonamphibious means. ... Rather than being an integral part of a naval force projecting power from the sea, Marine landing forces now see themselves as lead elements of a Marine component command. Amphibious task forces offer just another deployment means to get to the real fight ashore."¹² The Marine Corps must reemphasize the amphibious operation. It should disengage itself from being a key player ashore in the MTW operations plans. If this means the Army requires another division or two, so be it. To prevent this requirement the plans can place greater emphasis on support from allies. Without the requirement to provide multiple divisions ashore for MTW's, the Marine Corps can reduce the size of its ground forces.

These ground forces should be built around two MEF's, one on each coast. The West Coast MEF will consist of 3 MEB's, one forward deployed in Okinawa with two MEB's in the East Coast MEF. This will still provide enough force structure to continue to support the MEU deployment program. With the reintroduction of the MEB staffs, the MEF's can focus on the joint integration of Marine capabilities while amphibious planning, training, and expertise can remain with the MEB. The Marine Corps will also

still have enough forces to conduct other operations as needed on the lower end of the spectrum around the world.

Some capability in the ground forces can also be disposed of. The Marine Corps does not have a need for tanks unless they are conducting large-scale campaigns ashore against a powerful enemy. With attack helicopters and other anti-tank weapons available to ground forces, they have more than enough capability to overcome the numbers and quality of tanks they may face at the low or medium scale of the spectrum. The Marine Corps main battle tank, the M-1, is not well suited to participating in operational maneuver from the sea, quickly moving ashore directly into battle from a ship over the horizon. The large lift requirement makes it a hindrance to quick, flexible operations.

Large-scale personnel reductions will snowball with other personnel savings. With the smaller force, fewer recruits are required each year. This will allow for a higher quality force with a much smaller recruiting force. Fewer personnel also translates into fewer staffs at the training institutions and the recruit depots. One of the two recruit depots can be closed further saving money and people. The Marine Corps must focus on being a force of fighters. The supporting establishments must be reduced to the minimum required to maintain the force in peacetime and on the battlefield.

The Marine Corps Reserve can also be reorganized to achieve cuts and savings while increasing the capabilities and support potential to the active forces. It is already well suited to the Marine Corps of the future and only needs minor modifications as compared to the active forces. The Marine Reserve focus and emphasis on the battalion and Squadron level ensures these units are at a much higher state of readiness than the reserves of the other services. "Your skills don't diminish as rapidly if you're focused on

¹² LtCol R. Scott Moore, "Maneuver From the Sea...Maybe" Marine Corps Gazette, April 1996, 26.

maneuvering as a battalion or a squadron inside a much larger entity than if your job is to be a division commander and take the whole division through operations at division and corps level. A battalion is an entity that we can keep at a higher state of readiness than would be required for a larger force."¹³ To ensure that they are even more prepared to support a contingency with the active forces, there needs to be more integration of these battalions and squadrons with the active duty command and control structure. The reserves do not require the aviation and other elements of the command and control structure. All that is required is a small administrative headquarters to supervise the day to day business. When it comes time for the reserve units to train they should use the active duty command and control structure. The Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) can be relied upon in large-scale contingencies to fill in the holes where specific individuals are needed during a crisis.

To face the uncertainty of the future security environment the Marine Corps needs to return to the past and look to its roots. The essence of the Marine Corps has been and must be amphibious operations. Contrary to what the cynics say, there is still a great need for the capability that only the Marine Corps can provide. Unfortunately the Marine Corps is losing the capability upon which it must rely. MEU size amphibious operations are what the Marine Corps has been reduced to. It is making strides towards preparing for the future. The Sea Dragon experiment with Hunter Warrior and Urban Warrior are preparing for the future. The focus though continues to be on new tactics and equipment for the MEU. If the Marine Corps allows its ability to conduct MEB size operations disappear, then in the future its only role in the U.S. military will be the MEU.

¹³ Glenn W. Goodman, Jr., "Reserves-In-Readiness," Armed Forces Journal International, January 1998, 18.

Eventually the country will not be able to afford a second army and air force, even though the Marine Corps does it cheaper than the other services.

There are three courses of action for the Marine Corps to choose among. The first is to follow the basic path it is today, to make minor changes on the fringes. This appears to be working but will not succeed in the future international environment. The second course is to cut back on everything and focus on the MEU's. This will result in a Marine Corps suited for small peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and other minor missions. This would result in a Corps drastically smaller and with far less capability than proposed in the preceding pages. The final course is the one I propose. Increase the Corps' amphibious capability. This will allow it to remain the force of choice and provide power projection and forcible entry anywhere with a beach. This can be done immediately without waiting for the military revolution of technology.

The United States will remain actively engaged in the world. There will also be pressures to continue the reduction in force size and funding. Will the Marine Corps change itself or will it wait for change to be forced upon it? A recent Marine Corps paper entitled Force 174: Ensuring National Expeditionary capabilities into the 21st Century discusses the results of an analysis of the roles of the services conducted by the 82d Congress as a result of early setbacks in the Korean War. Title 10 of the U.S. Code was amended as a result. The intent of Congress was to create a balanced naval combined armed force, acting immediately on short notice without the need for reserves or support from the Army or Air Force warfighting forces. The Marine Corps has allowed this capability to fade. The paper further points out that Congress implied that there should be a clear division of labor between expeditionary, crisis response forces and those

focused on winning wars. The Army, while still focusing on winning wars, has greatly increased its expeditionary capability to almost match that of the Marine Corps. The paper goes on to highlight that "it is the Army and the Air Force that are raised to win our nation's wars". The Marine Corps is supposed to be ready to win the first battles.

The Marine Corps must restructure, reduce its inventory and support structure to meet future challenges. It provides a critical element of the National Military Strategy. Unless it reworks itself into the Marine Corps required by the nation, it will do a disservice to itself and more importantly to the nation.